Research, Write, Communicate | Persuasive Writing

Persuasive Style

Key Concept
Have you ever argued with someone or tried to make them believe something? Maybe you tried to convince your parents to let you stay up later. Maybe you argued with a friend over who was better at an activity. Being able to explain your position to an audience and convince them to agree is an important communication skill.

The persuasive style of writing helps you make an argument for or against an idea or activity. An essay is a short written work that makes an important point about a topic chosen by the author. A persuasive essay, or persuasion, is a short written work that tries to convince an audience to believe an idea or take an action.

How can you convince readers to agree with you? The primary purpose of a persuasive essay is to convince an audience to agree with your position. A well-written persuasion supports a particular point of view by presenting evidence, such as facts, data, statistics, and quotes. The persuasive style is often the best choice for writing projects in both school and work settings.

Look Ahead
Task: Read and analyze a persuasive essay.
Goal: Show that you know what makes an effective persuasive essay.
You may want to review an example of a persuasive analysis before you begin.
See the example: Persuasive Analysis
Vocabulary

**Words to Remember**
This page gives basic definitions for some important terms that can help you learn about using peer review to revise an essay. You can get a more complete definition of each term from Fact Monster*.

**New Words**
*Argument:* A logical explanation intended to convince an audience to agree with a particular point of view on an issue.

*Audience:* The people who read a publication or view a work of art, performance, or presentation.

*Conclusion:* A judgment, decision, or solution reached for specific reasons.

*Data:* Information collected by observation or measurement.

*Essay:* A short written work that makes an important point about a particular topic.

*Evidence:* Objective information supporting an argument, such as facts, data, and statistics.

*Expository:* A type of writing that explains a topic or informs an audience.

*Fact:* Information widely believed to be true and supported by objective data.

*First Person:* A type of writing that tells a story by using pronouns that refer to the author of the story, such as *I* and *we*.

*Information:* Anything that can be used to create knowledge. For example, words, numbers, images, audio, and video can all contain *information*.

*Issue:* An idea or action on which people with different points of view have strong opinions.

*Logical:* Capable of thinking in a clear and consistent way to draw correct conclusions.

*Nonfiction:* Any creative work that describes or comments on actual events, such as a newspaper article or biography.

*Objective:* Able to put aside personal feelings and opinions.

*Opinion:* Beliefs that may or may not be supported by facts.

*Persuasive:* A type of writing intended to influence the thoughts or actions of an audience.
Point of View: The way a person tends to think about people, places, and events based on individual experiences.

Quote: Use another person’s exact words.

Statistics: Facts and data that can be represented by numbers; also the study of numerical facts and data.

Third Person: A type of writing that tells a story by using pronouns that refer to a character in the story, such as he, she, or they.
Exploration

Learning from the Web
Explore some Web sites about the persuasive style of writing. Learn when and how to use the persuasive style to write an essay.

While you explore the following Web sites, think about the guiding questions. You may want to take notes to help you answer the questions. If you think of any other questions about the persuasive style of writing, keep those in mind too.

Guiding Questions

- What are some good reasons to write a persuasive essay?
- When would the persuasive style not be a good choice for an essay?
- How is the persuasive style different from other writing you may have done?

Web Sites

- How to Write a Persuasive Essay* from Fact Monster*
- Writing Workshop: Persuasive Writing* from Scholastic*
- Persuasive Essays and Prompts* from The Five Paragraph Essay*
- Persuasive Essay* from Essay Info*
- Basic Principles of Persuasive Writing* from the University of British Columbia*
Information

What to Know
This page summarizes some of the information from the Web sites you explored. This information helps you learn what you need to know for this activity about the persuasive style of writing. You may want to take notes to help you remember the most important points. You can return to the Web sites for more exploration if you want to learn more.

The Persuasive Style of Writing
An essay is a short written work that makes an important point about a topic chosen by the author. A persuasive essay is a short written work that attempts to influence the thoughts or actions of an audience. Persuasive authors take positions and make arguments to convince readers to agree with their positions. Persuasive writing is appropriate when you want to present evidence for or against an idea or action.

Persuasive and expository writing have some common characteristics. Expository essays present objective information (facts, data, and statistics) without favoring any particular point of view. Persuasive essays try to prove that the author's point of view is logical based on evidence. Expository essays are usually written in third person, using pronouns such as he, she, or they. Persuasive essays may be written in first person, using pronouns such as I and we.

When to Use Persuasive Writing
The persuasive style of writing can be useful in a variety of contexts. Editorials in newspapers and magazines are usually written in the persuasive style because they take a position on events in the news. The persuasive style is also used in a speech, memorandum, presentation, advertisement, letter, or e-mail. Any time the goal is to be convincing, the persuasive style can help. The format in which you choose to write depends on your purpose and audience.

Some important points to remember about the persuasive style of writing: Make sure you have included all information needed to explain the topic

- Choose an issue that is specific enough to present all relevant information in the essay
- Present evidence such as facts, data, or statistics to support your position
- Quote experts or authorities who share your position
- Show that you have objectively considered other positions on the issue
- Consider your audience and the kinds of evidence they might find convincing

Some important points to remember when you write a persuasive essay:
• Clearly state your position on the issue in the first paragraph
• Organize each paragraph around a main point
• Make sure all information in a paragraph supports the paragraph’s main point
• Arrange paragraphs in a logical order that is easy to follow and understand
• Summarize the evidence in the last paragraph and explain how your position is a logical conclusion
• Do not introduce any new information in the last paragraph
Task

What to Do
Complete the following task to show what you have learned about the persuasive style of writing. While you work through the task, think about whether you are achieving the goal. You may want to review an example of a persuasive analysis before you begin.

Task: Read and analyze a persuasive essay.

Goal: Show that you know what makes an effective persuasive essay.

See the example: Persuasive Analysis

1. Read a sample persuasive essay. You may choose one of the following essays, or your teacher may assign one:
   - Summer: 15 Days or 2 1/2 Months?* from The Write Source*
   - Saturday School: Pro or Con* from ThinkQuest*
   - Should Marine Mammals Be in Captivity* from Scholastic*
   - Sample Persuasive Essay: To Drill or Not to Drill* (PDF; 1 page) from Time for Kids*
   - Sample Basic Essay* from Guide to Writing a Basic Essay*
   - Persuasive Essay Sample* from Elephant Man Webquest*

2. Start a new word processing document. Always remember to type your name and the date at the top of the document.

3. Type a title for the document. You may want to include the title of the persuasive essay you analyze, such as Persuasive Analysis of ____________.

4. Write one or two paragraphs explaining why the essay you read is or is not an effective exposition. Give specific examples of effective or ineffective persuasive writing in the essay.

5. Check the spelling and grammar of your analysis.

6. Double-check your work by reading the document carefully one more time.

7. Review the checklist and revise your analysis to make sure it is complete.
8. Save your analysis. Ask your teacher for help if you do not know where to save the file. Your teacher may also ask you to print or e-mail your file.

9. Share your analysis.
I believe the essay, “Saturday School: Pro or Con” is a good example of persuasive writing. The issue of Saturday school is specific enough to present the relevant information necessary to make the author’s point. The first paragraph clearly states the author’s position and the reasons that are going to be debated throughout the essay. Each paragraph is organized around a main point and the point is adequately explored. All information in each paragraph is directly related to the topic. The paragraphs are arranged in a logical order which makes the author’s points easy to understand. The last paragraph logically summarizes all the arguments and brings the essay to a logical conclusion.

The essay would have been better, however, if the author would have presented facts or data to support her position. It also would have added credibility to her position if she would have quoted experts in the field of education that support her position. I also don’t feel that the author showed that she objectively considered other points of view before taking her position. This essay might have been convincing if the audience was other students, but not as convincing if the audience was meant to be persons of authority in the schools or parents.